

“DRAFT”

**South River Programmatic Restoration
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

South River Field Office
EA# OR-105-02-05

Date Prepared: May 4, 2004

Finding of No Significant Impact

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the South River Programmatic Restoration Environmental Assessment (EA). Two alternatives were analyzed. Alternative One, the “No Action” alternative and Alternative Two, the “Proposed Action” are described in Chapter 2 of the EA (pp. 5-10).

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment are not relevant because they are not present in the project area and would not be affected: Wild and Scenic Rivers; Wilderness; Wastes, Hazardous or Solid.

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment would not be affected by the proposed restoration activities: Air Quality; Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); Prime or Unique Farmlands; Visual Resources; Water Quality. No unique characteristics would be impacted, as described in Council on Environmental Quality Regulations contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(3).

The proposed restoration projects are consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. There would be no impacts to low-income or minority populations that have been identified by the BLM internally or through the public involvement process. Correspondence with local Native American tribal governments has not identified any known unique or special resources in the project area which provide employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities.

Correspondence with local Native American tribal governments has not identified any religious concerns or values associated with the proposed restoration projects and project sites, so there would be no effect on Native American Religious Concerns (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8)).

Section 106 responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act will be completed by the BLM in accordance with the 1998 Oregon State Historic Preservation Office protocols. A review of current inventories and subsequent pedestrian surveys has been completed for all of the currently proposed culvert projects. Surveys for other projects will be completed as specific proposals are planned and designed. Where resources of cultural or historical significance are Identified, projects would be modified to avoid these resources, or dropped from further consideration if modification is not considered practical (EA, p. 19). As a consequence, there would be no impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8)).

There are seventeen special status wildlife and botanical species known or suspected of inhabiting lands in proximity to proposed restoration project sites are identified in the EA. These include the Federally-threatened bald eagle, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and Kincaid's lupine (EA, pp. 15-17). There are three botanical species (EA, pp. 17-18) and ten wildlife species (EA, pp. 33-36) designated as Bureau Sensitive or Bureau Assessment.

The BLM has made a determination of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" for the spotted owl, the marbled murrelet and the bald eagle.

As described in the EA (pp. 15-16), non-commercial vegetative treatments in young riparian stands would not remove or modify suitable habitat for spotted owls, murrelets or bald eagles. Disturbance to nesting owls and murrelets would be a possibility but would be mitigated by the application of seasonal or daily operating restrictions, project modification or project postponement if a project is located within ¼-mile of nesting owls or ¼-mile of occupied murrelet habitat or suitable habitat that has not been surveyed for murrelet occupancy.

Instream restoration projects have the potential to modify suitable habitat for owls, murrelets and eagles by creating canopy openings, removing cover, and removing or damaging nesting and roosting trees. With the application of tree selection criteria described in the EA (pp. 30-32), these effects are expected to be minimal and would not affect use of the stands by owls, murrelets and eagles, or the local distribution of populations of the species. Effects from the construction of temporary bypass roads associated with the replacement of culverts would be comparable.

Because road improvements and decommissioning could be undertaken during nesting season, disturbance would be a potential concern. The seasonal and daily operational restrictions described above would be implemented, where necessary, to mitigate these concerns. Because these activities would be limited to the road right-of-way, no effect on habitat would be expected.

Effects to designated Critical Habitat Units for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet would be associated with tree removal for instream restoration projects. The low level of tree removal would have a negligible effect on the function of these stands and was determined as "no adverse affect."

No adverse effects to species listed as Bureau Sensitive or Bureau Assessment were identified (EA, pp. 33-36). Where warranted, surveys would be conducted and projects designed to avoid species or mitigate potential effects in order to support stable populations of these species.

A determination of "no effect" was made for Kincaid's lupine, because if the lupine is located in site surveys, individual projects would be modified to protect the plant populations, or dropped if no suitable project modification is available. No adverse effects to populations of Bureau Sensitive or Bureau Assessment botanical species would be anticipated. Clearances would be conducted prior to project design. Where warranted, surveys would be conducted and projects designed to avoid plant populations or mitigate potential effects, such that the distribution of these species would be largely unaffected.

As a consequence, there would be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(9)), and any impacts would be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS).

Potential effects to fish and Essential Fish Habitat are associated with sediment. With application of the project design features described above and identified in the National Marine Fisheries Service *Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion for Programmatic Activities Affecting SONC Coho Salmon, OC Coho Salmon, and OC Steelhead* the effects will be localized and short term, and “not have an adverse effect” on Essential Fish Habitat.

In the long term, the projects would beneficially affect salmon, trout and Essential Fish Habitat. Riparian restoration projects would hasten the development of late-successional forest conditions in young riparian forest stands. Instream restoration projects would provide aquatic habitat in greater abundance and complexity, and would improve stream structure and function. The replacement of stream crossings would remove barriers to upstream and downstream migration of fish, and restore access to many miles of historic spawning and rearing habitat. Road improvements and decommissioning would reduce fine sediments from road-surface erosion, improving aquatic habitat and water quality conditions in general. As a consequence, the projects would not have any significant adverse impacts to coho salmon, steelhead trout and Essential Fish Habitat, within the context of 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(9).

The projects proposed in the South River Programmatic Restoration EA are consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local laws (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10)). The impacts of the proposed actions on the human environment do not exceed those anticipated and addressed in the Roseburg District PRMP/EIS.

Of the twelve points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and found not to apply to the proposed action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider the effects of this decision on the President’s National Energy Policy. Within the South River Resource Area there are no known energy resources with the potential for commercial development. There are no rights-of-way or easements for wind, solar or geo-thermal power development, and there are energy producing or processing facilities. While electrical transmission and natural gas pipeline right-of-ways are present, they would be unaffected by the actions proposed. As a consequence, the proposed South River Programmatic Restoration projects would have no known adverse effect, either direct or indirect, on National Energy Policy.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and that an EIS is not

required. I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Roseburg District PRMP/EIS and *Record of Decision/ Resource Management Plan* (June, 1995).

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South River Field Office

Date